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EDITORIAL COMMENT

The Editorial Board of African Journal of Educational Research is pleased to release Volume 12, No. 2 (2008) of the journal after a painstaking effort to make sure that articles in the number represent the best for which the journal is known. The Board, therefore, commends the edition to readers.

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Appraisal of pre-service English Language teachers' exposure to computer literacy in four Nigerian universities

By

Samson Olusola Olatunji

and

Clement Olusegun Olaniran Kolawole

Abstract

The paper investigated the level of exposure of pre-service teachers to computers by Nigerian universities in their teacher preparation programmes so that such pre-service teachers become computer literate and skillful in its use in the teaching and learning of English language at the secondary school level. This is because the status of English as both a compulsory subject and the language of instruction at the secondary school level in Nigeria make it imperative that teachers use devices that can improve its teaching and help to reduce the problem of mass failure in it. But information available indicates that teachers and students do not utilize computers in the teaching and learning of English because the teachers themselves were not exposed to the use of computers during their preparation. The implication of this is that something drastic has to be done to improve the quality of teachers being prepared by our universities if they are expected to be able to cope with the challenges of teaching this important subject successfully at the secondary school level and beyond. Based on this, appropriate recommendations on what have to be done to improve the computer knowledge and skills of secondary school teachers of English has been made in the body of the paper.

Introduction

The importance of English Language in Nigerians' official, judicial, political, economic, religious, social, educational, and interpersonal as well as international relations has been 'widely acknowledged (Okedara, 1997; Adetugbo, 1997; Oluga, Adewusi, Babalola and Oyediran, 1999; Adeniran, 1980 and Olatunji 2000; Kolawole and Olatunji, 2007). In fact, English is seen as the most widely used language on the international scene (Garandlin, n.d; Adeseye, 2006). This important position of the subject has influenced its present status in the educational landscape of Nigeria where it is both a compulsory subject that students must take and pass, sometimes at credit level and the language of instruction at the secondary school level in Nigeria. In addition to this enviable position, English Language is taught across the levels of education in Nigeria so that students can

be well-grounded in the subject as a second language.

However, the general performance by candidates in the senior secondary school certificate examinations in Nigeria over the years has been woeful and has not reflected the attention the subject has received (Ayodele, 2001; Kolawole and Olatunji, 2007). Various factors have been adduced to this perennial mass failure. Some of the factors identified by different scholars include school environment, policy on language education, inappropriate course content, absence and general low application of ICT, socio-economic as well as teacher factors.

Computer an English Language Teaching and Learning in Schools

The invaluable advantage of employing information and communication technologies in language teaching and learning in the classroom as well as outside has been extensively outlined by several authors

(Ogenyi, 2006; Idiagbon, 2003; Taff, 1997). Some of these claims are substantiated with practical examples from successful personal experience (Kees, 2007; Balanskat, Blamire and Kafalla, 2007; Biesembach-Lucas, 2007; Bang and Dalsgaard 2006) and institutional support. The use of the technologies, among other advantages, makes learning real, practical, relevant to life situations, permanent and interesting.

The computer is the basic driver of most processes involved in Information and Communication Technology. But it is a truism that the use of ICT in education is an improvement on the application of computer technology in life (Olusanya & Oloyede, 2003). Akubuilu (2007) also holds the view that ICT is the major employer of computers to the extent that the two are often thought to be synonymous. The computer, apart from being a major component of ICT, has also been used to tremendous advantage in the language classroom (Basswood, 1997; Cameron 1987). Thus, we have such terms as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Computer Assisted Language Instruction (CALI), Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and so on.

The importance of computer in national development as well as education in particular in Nigeria is underscored by the making of the National Policy on Computer Education in 1988 and the Decree 43 of 1993 which established the Computer Professional Registration Council of Nigeria under the umbrella of the Computer Association of Nigeria (Adeniyi, 1996). So, the use of ICT and its facilities at the different levels of the Nigerian education has been severally promised in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004, pp. 12, 16, 18).

As obvious as the benefits of computer in education and computer for education are, it is important to note that without the right caliber of people to use the gadgets efficiently, whatever heavy investment is made in procuring them would at best be a monumental waste. To buttress this point, Abdulkareem (2003) emphasizes the superiority of human resources over non-human resources and stresses that educational institutions are established to train and develop the human resources.

The relevance of this truth is made clearer by the pronouncement of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) that the teacher is the key factor in educational development who no micro-computer, television or well scripted lesson can replace. This is why emphasis is laid on the production of teachers who are well versed in the application of ICT in instructional delivery in advanced countries of the world.

The importance of ICT to educational development and teacher training was underscored by the need to use the facility in teacher training institutions so that the teachers can go out to schools to use the facility in actual classroom teaching. According to Joger and Lokman (1999), the committee, that worked on how to improve teacher training programme in their country, 'argued for a powerful role of teachers training in the process of educational innovation and the implementation of ICT', in its efforts at formulating policies that will improve the quality of teachers and teacher training programmes.

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria thus asserts that "no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers" (FGN, 2004: 33). Hence, the government set for itself the target of producing qualified teachers for all levels of education in the country. Since the teacher's role in the implementation of any educational enterprise is this crucial, Idiagbon's (2003) recommendation that English Language teachers be computer literate became an efficient facilitator which led to the introduction of Computer Assisted Language Learning programme in school. The implication of this is that such teachers trained with the use of ICT would be expected to extend the skills to their students in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Unfortunately however, Kolawole and Olatunji (2007) found out that the English language teachers in junior secondary schools in selected part of Oyo State, Nigeria were grossly deficient in matters of basic computer knowledge, let alone how to apply the gadget to language teaching and learning. This means that the Nigerian secondary school student is denied the excitement enjoyed in language learning situations coupled with the use of computer technology when compared with their

counterparts in developed nations of the world. Thus, it became imperative to find out what factors influenced the teachers' apparent lack of knowledge in computer use in classroom teaching in spite of the fact that the use of computer technology has become a household issue in the world.

Problem of the study

In order to establish the factors responsible for the situation painted above, it becomes imperative to find out what facilities are being used in colleges and faculties where teachers are being prepared for the school system in Nigeria. This is because such institutions are expected to deploy the use of computer technology and other ICT facilities in their teacher preparation programmes so that such teachers can effectively cope with the challenges of teaching at the secondary school level. Specifically therefore, this study appraised pre-service English Language teachers' exposure to computer literacy skills in four Nigerian universities in the South West.

Methodology

Design

The survey design of the ex post facto type was used to survey the faculties being used in selected Nigerian universities in the production of teachers that would be expected to deploy computer technology and other ICT equipment in the teaching and learning of English Language at the secondary school level in the country.

Subjects

Two private and two public universities were randomly selected for the study. Thirty

(30) four hundred level (finalist) pre-service English Language teachers were randomly selected from each of the two public universities while twenty-five were selected from the private ones. Thus, a total of sixty and fifty students were drawn from the public and private universities respectively. The disparity in sample sizes arose from the fact that the public universities have a larger population of students than their private counterparts.

Instrument and Procedure

A ten-item self-constructed questionnaire titled "Computer Literacy for English Language in Nigerian Universities" (CLELNU) was trial-tested on thirty pre-service English Language teachers in a university other than the ones sampled for the study. The questionnaire had two sections: Section A which sought information about the respondents' school, names and sex, and section B containing eight items that probed the respondents' exposure to computer literacy by their universities. A Cronbach alpha 0.82 was achieved from the validation exercise. One hundred and ten copies of the questionnaire were taken to the selected institutions and personally administered with the assistance of some of their lecturers. A total of one hundred and four copies found useful for the study were used.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage scores.

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents

School Type	Males	Females	Total
Public Universities	21	37	58
Private Universities	13	33	46
Total	34	70	104

Table 1 shows that 21 males and 37 females (58) from two public universities and 13 males and 33 females (46) from private universities responded to the instruments. These make a total of 34 males and 70 females. This is a reflection of

the male dominance in teaching at the higher institution level in the country

Research Question 1: Are Nigerian pre-service language teachers computer literate?

Table 2: The computer literacy status of Pre-Service English Language Teachers and the sources of their literacy.

Literacy Status	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulate
Computer literate	71	68.3	100
Non-computer literate	33	31.7	
Exposed to computer by university	59	56.7	
Not exposed to computer by university	45	43.3	100

Table 2 shows that while 71 (68.3%) of the pre-service teachers claimed to be computer literate 33 (31.7%) are not computer literate. Also, 59 (56.7%) of those who are literate claimed that they were exposed to computer literacy as part of their university education while 45 (43.3%) that claimed that they were not literate were not exposed to such in their universities. Firstly, even though 68.3 of the teachers had been exposed to computers in their universities, a good percentage as much as 45 (43.3%) has not been exposed to computers by their universities. This is discouraging particularly when one considers the implications of such on the students they teach the important subject. This is without prejudice to the fact that the functionality of the computer literacy of the 68.3% is yet to be ascertained.

This disclosure answers research question 1 and confirms that some universities in Nigeria are not living up to their expectation in terms of computer literacy provision for the pre-service teachers. Through personal interaction with some of the respondents, the authors discovered that some who claimed not to have been offered any computer course had only forgotten that they had taken a course in computer literacy. This indicates that universities have to do more than they are doing presently in order to improve the computer literacy skills of the teachers they are producing for the school system.

Research Question 2: *How much of computer literacy have pre-service English Language teachers been exposed to by their universities?*

Table 3: No of computer courses offered pre-service English Language teachers in selected Nigerian universities.

No of Courses	Responses	
	Frequency	Percentage
1	41	39.4
2	55	52.9
3	3	2.9
4	2	1.9
5	3	2.9
Total	104	100.0

While 41 (39.4%) of the final-year pre-service English Language teachers had been offered only one computer course which must have been introductory in nature, 55 (52.9%) had been exposed to two of such courses. 3 (2.9%), 2 (1.9%) and 3 (2.9%) of them claimed that they had been offered three, four, and five computer courses respectively.

Two computer courses throughout a four-year teacher preparation programme, though negligible, may be acceptable provided there is in-depth treatment of all

necessary learning contents with a lot of practical sessions. However, if only 52.9% of those who require such training were so privileged, then the consequences of the deficiency of the remaining 47.1% could outweigh the efficiency of their privileged 52.9% counterparts and this could have a negative multiplier effect on the computer literacy skills of the English Language teachers.

Therefore, the answer to research question 2 is that the Pre-service English Language teachers were exposed to varied

degree of computer courses by their universities even though that did not guarantee their proficiency in computer usage.

Research Question 3: *How do the pre-service English Language teachers perceive the computer literacy content of their training?*

Table 3: shows how pre-service English Language teachers perceive the content of the computer literacy training they were exposed to by their universities

Table 4: Nigerian pre-service English teachers' perception of the content of the computer courses they were exposed to by their universities.	Positive	Negative	Cumulative
Adequacy of computer and time for practice	51 (49.0)	53 (51.0)	104 (100%)
Pre-service teachers' confidence for efficient use of computer	45 (43.3)	59 (56.7)	104 (100%)
Pre-service teachers' perception of the pedagogical content of their computer courses	29 (27.9)	75 (72.1)	(104%)
Average	125 (40.07)	187 (59.93)	312 (100%)

Table 4 reveals that 51 (49.0%) of the respondents perceived that the content of the computer literacy programme and the time provided by their universities were enough for quality practice while a larger number (53 or 51.0%) stated otherwise. Also, 45 (43.3%) asserted that the computer literacy offered by their universities has empowered them for efficient use of the computer while 59 (56.7%), a much larger percentage, confessed their lack of confidence to operate a computer efficiently in spite of the computer literacy course (s) offered by their institutions. Furthermore, only 29 (27.9%) stated that the computer literacy courses included the pedagogies of computer application to different specific language learning contents and contexts. 75 (72.1%) of the respondents, however, judged the courses as being too general and not particularly and clearly targeted at making them masters of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

It is noteworthy at this juncture to note that contrary to logical expectation, quite a number of the respondents from one of the universities judged the first computer course they were exposed to (titled - Introduction to Computer) too abstract,

irrelevant and much more difficult and technical than the second (titled - Advanced Computer Studies). According to them, their bitter complaints about the introductory course and the mass failure recorded led to its being scrapped. This thus raises a number of questions about the content selection and the handling of the computer courses included in the teacher preparation programmes.

In order to answer research question 3, one then can note that the pre-service English Language teachers generally perceive the computer literacy courses included in their training programmes as abstract, irrelevant and inadequate, considering the fact that a total of only 125 (40.07%) of their responses rated the courses positively while 187 (59.93%) rated the programme as being irrelevant and inapplicable to them in the classroom situation.

Research Question 4: *How adequately equipped with computer systems are Departments where pre-service English Language teachers are being prepared in the universities?*

Table 5: Analysis of adequacy of computer learning equipment for pre-service English Language Teachers.

	Positive	Negative	Total
Availability of Computers	22 (21.2)	82 (78.8)	104 (100%)
Adequate number of computers	28 (26.9)	76 (73.1)	104 (100%)
Average	50 (24.05)	158 (75.95%)	208 (100%)

While 22 (21.2%) of respondents indicated that their departments have computers, 82 (78.8%) indicated that their departments have no such facility. Also, 28 (26.9%) of them considered the computer systems possessed by their departments adequate in number while 76 (73.1%) asserted that their departments are inadequately equipped with computer systems. On the average, therefore, 50 (24.05%) of the responses agreed that the computer learning equipment are adequate while 158 (75.95%) indicated that departments where teachers are being prepared are not adequately provided with computer systems and accessories. The answer to research question 4, therefore, is that the pre-service English Language teachers do not have access to adequate computer facilities.

Discussion of Implications of the Findings

The findings from this study have clearly revealed that the university departments saddled with the responsibility of manpower development for the teaching of English Language in Nigerian schools do not adequately expose their students to computer literacy programmes in terms of the contents of their programmes and the facilities put in place to make that possible. They rarely go beyond telling the pre-service teachers about the basic components of the computer. There are few or no practical sessions during which the teachers-in-training are allowed to interact with the facility.

In most cases, the content of the computer literacy programme are so theoretical that the pre-service English Language teachers lack the confidence to do any basic computer operation. Computers are supposed to be introduced into the pre-service teachers' programmes, not just for the sake of the computers but

to enable the beneficiaries to manipulate the machines to take care of the peculiar needs of language teaching and learning. It was, however, discovered that the pedagogical skills for effective use of the computer in language classroom situations are not given the required attention.

Several factors including poor funding and lack of commitment on the part of the management of the universities can be adduced as reasons for the low computer literacy skills of most of the teachers being produced by the institutions. In addition, there is no regular supply of electricity to power the few computer systems that are available.

Conclusion

Nigerian universities are yet to demonstrate satisfactory level of commitment to making their English Language teachers-in-training proficient in the use of computers through the use of the Computer Assisted Language Instructions. This is why most of the teachers cannot fully deplore the computers in the teaching of English Language in schools and cannot make their students to benefit from the resources of the computers. This situation must change positively if we are to experience any improvement in the quality of teaching and improved students performance in English Language at every level of education. In order to achieve the desired change in attitude, the following recommendations have to be carefully implemented without any further delay.

Recommendations

1. The National Universities Commission (NUC) and other concerned bodies need to take drastic steps to review the university curriculum to ensure that the skills necessary for employing computers and other ICT facilities to

enhance teachers' proficiency are emphasized in the universities programmes. This recommendation is in line with Ndukwe's (2006) call for a redesigning of the curriculum to bridge the ICT proficiency divide which does not favour Nigeria. According to Ndukwe, it will be "wrong and unfair" to put our graduates in disadvantaged positions in situations while they are competing in the global job market.

2. Every effort must be made to ensure that the concerned departments in our universities are well stocked with computers and other ICT facilities. Government cannot afford to continue to shy away from the UNESCO's recommendation that at least 26% of total annual national budget be devoted to education. Furthermore, necessary measures must be taken to ensure that the funds so allocated do not go into private bank accounts. Public - Private collaboration should also be exploited to improve the conditions of the teacher training departments in our public universities.
3. Steps should be taken to send the lecturers to handle computer literacy programme of pre-service and in-service English Language teachers on refresher courses abroad. This will afford them the opportunity to have first-hand experience with practical application of computer software to specific language learning contents and contexts. Thus, a situation in which the learners do not see any relevance of computers to their discipline would be prevented.
4. Schools must be fully stocked with functional computer systems and adequate source of electricity to power them for use during teaching and learning in order to expose students to the full advantage of computer use in their day-to-day activities.

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